Inter-Agency Standing Committee

Ad Hoc IASC Working Group Meeting

Final Summary Record

30 June 2014

Audio/Videoconference

Opening

The Chair of the IASC WG, Kyung-wha Kang, DERC/ASG OCHA, welcomed participants to the first Ad Hoc IASC WG since the adoption of the new modalities and introduced the items on the agenda.

The Post-2015 Agenda and Humanitarian Issues

Anton Santanen, OCHA, provided an update on the inter-governmental process around the post-2015 agenda; the humanitarian elements in the zero draft of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) prepared by the Open Working Group (OWG); and possible opportunities to influence the agenda. On a related matter, the Chair noted the need to decide a way forward on the IASC Principals December 2013 request to identify the main obstacles to bridging relief and development actions.

The discussion focused on which humanitarian elements could be realistically reflected in the SDGs, particularly given the late stage of the process. Some humanitarian priorities, such as resilience and disaster risk reduction, are included, but the focus is more on natural disasters and climate change, with conflicts and fragility receiving less attention in the zero draft. Some felt that there should also be a stronger focus on vulnerability. The target on reducing the number of IDPs and refugees was particularly welcomed and viewed as essential to retain. The Solutions Alliance has been working on identifying indicators for this target, but the overall process of developing indicators remains unclear. Having several quantifiable targets in the SDGs that are also relevant to the humanitarian community would be helpful. Under poverty eradication, targets to reduce casualties, mortality, and economic losses caused by conflicts could be suggested.

Engaging more broadly with Member States on the need to reflect the humanitarian concerns in the SDGs was suggested. One participant recommended thinking through how the humanitarian programme cycle can serve as the framework to devise targets for the different SDGs. While welcome, it was noted that efforts at introducing targets and/or indicators were probably too late at this point. Instead, it was proposed that IASC organizations monitor the discussions to keep the gains already achieved. It was suggested that both the SDG discussions and the World Humanitarian Summit provide opportunities for humanitarians to challenge themselves to be more creative and expansive in how they work and to focus less on influencing the processes. It was noted that UN agencies will also be able to influence the process through the Secretary-General’s synthesis report to be submitted to the General Assembly, as well as through discussions at the Chief Executive Board, by further embedding humanitarian issues in its work. Considering, in the near future, the implications of the SDGs and the post-2015 development framework on humanitarian response and architecture was also suggested.

FAO and the World Bank volunteered to lead the follow-up to the Principals December action point on the obstacles to bridging relief and development, with inputs from other organizations.

***Action Points:***

1. OCHA, in consultation with other IASC organizations following the SDG negotiations, will keep the WG informed of developments; share the new draft of the Open Working Group Document; highlight where more information and joint/individual IASC organization engagement is needed to promote humanitarian concerns; and incorporate language proposed by IASC organizations into the draft SDGs. (Action by: *OCHA and IASC organizations by 31 July 2014*.)
2. FAO and the World Bank will work with interested colleagues to “identify the main obstacles to bridging relief and development actions through a review of efforts over the past several years with a view to identifying good practices.” (Action by: *FAO, World Bank, UN-Habitat and other interested organizations by November 2014*.)

L3s in Slow-Onset Crises or Protracted Crises

Kate Halff, SCHR, introduced the paper developed in follow-up to the March 2014 joint WG/EDG session. It aims to clarify when an L3 should be declared in slow-onset or protracted crises; what issues would be addressed by specific measures to be put in place; and when the declaration would end. These clarifications would ensure consistency in understanding to help manage expectations. Currently, L3 declarations in such settings risk potentially following an agenda external to the IASC. Once there is endorsement at the WG, EDG, and Principals levels, what process the IASC would undertake – beyond examining the current five criteria for L3s – before declaring an L3 declaration in a slow-onset or protracted crisis requires clarification. The process to ensure that the EDG, and not just the WG, endorses the paper was raised as being key.

A proposal made during the discussion for L3s to be declared for six months in slow-onset and protracted crises, while keeping sudden onset L3 declarations for three months, was welcomed. The recent request by a number of INGOs to extend the L3 declaration in Central African Republic (CAR) illustrated the lack of common understanding around what an L3 should achieve. Such an extension would act as a Band-Aid, instead of ensuring longer-term senior leadership and strategies. The clarification would help to manage expectations and help show how success should look. Including the role of Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) to carry out their own analysis was suggested. Questions were raised about the “hierarchy of L3s” (Syria, South Sudan, and then CAR) that has developed, despite being concurrent, and the implications of such a hierarchy.

The origins of the TA and L3 declarations were recalled: a system failure that requires a last resort declaration to ensure an appropriate response. Concerns were raised that the different measures and options proposed in the paper might risk some backing away from existing commitments. Some expressed the need to define what protocols should be adopted in an “L2” situation, but others warned that such an exercise might lead to a lengthy process. Relating the content of the paper to what is in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) Reference Module was suggested, as was including what actors outside the humanitarian community could do prior to declaring an L3. The roles and expectations of donors were also suggested for inclusion. However, others suggested keeping the L3 paper focused to provide clarity to the IASC and partners. Getting the EDG views and agreement on the L3 paper was seen as essential for moving forward. Those WG members who are also EDG members were requested to ensure the EDG’s endorsement of the paper.

***Action Points:***

1. Amend the paper on L3s in slow-onset and protracted crises to include: a) a six month declaration of L3s in slow-onset and protracted crises; and b) the role of HCTs in driving the analysis and requirements, prior to going to the EDG and then Principals (Action by: *SCHR with IASC Secretariat, by 20 July 2014*).

Policy Problem Statement: CSO/NDMA Capacity Strengthening

Joseph Lumanog, CFSI, and Eigil Kvernmo, ICVA, presented a proposal on strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) and national disaster management authorities (NDMAs), as a follow up to the March IASC WG. Based on previous experience, including in the Philippines, existing partnerships and relationships with local actors need to be better leveraged. There is also a need to bridge the gap between capacity and principles, including the *Principles of Partnership*. Given the wide scope of the issue, the paper deliberately focused on more manageable aspects of the issue, namely preparedness, participation and funding. On participation, there is a need to get a better understanding of existing coordination structures, capacity and local actors at the field level. NDMAs and CSOs often lack the knowledge to engage effectively with the international humanitarian coordination system. They recommended that the IASC WG map best practices of CSO representation in the IASC at local and global levels. It was further recommended that Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) review the adaptability of the transformative agenda (TA) protocols to national preparedness and response plans and coordination mechanisms.

Participants shared reflections on the work currently being done within the IASC on this topic, including in the Task Teams on Preparedness and Resilience (TTPR) and Humanitarian Financing (HFTT), the Reference Group on Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas, and within IASC organizations. The importance of clarifying what a mapping would achieve once completed was raised. The challenge that international actors have in engaging with numerous CSOs at the field level was also noted. Discerning how country strategies reflect the voices of CSOs could be a useful exercise to understand why funding is a recurring issue. Some emphasized that it was not realistic to ask the STAIT to take further work on board. Given that the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) aims to support country teams in preparedness and should involve local NGOs, CADRI was proposed as an alternative to the STAIT taking on more work. In relation to the possibility of adopting the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT) in humanitarian contexts, another participant noted that capacity-strengthening initiatives should also focus more on developing capacities on financial and programme management to enable CSOs.

***Action Points***

1. Map out best practices of CSO representation in IASC bodies (IASC WG, TTs and HCT and clusters) at local and global levels, as well as in national mechanisms (Action by: *ICVA by 31 December 2014*).
2. HFTT and TTPR to map out best practices, notably the assessment of the effectiveness of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT) framework in transferring funds to NDMAs and CSOs and successfully linking preparedness, emergency response, recovery, and development interventions, and to incorporate this work into their respective work plans. (Action by: *HFTT and TTPR by 30 June 2015).*
3. Suggest that CADRI and the TTPR look at how CSOs are involved in national preparedness and response plans and coordination mechanisms in 3-4 countries (Action by: *UNDP and TTPR by 30 November 2014).*

Update on the Work of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle Steering Group

Andrew Wyllie, OCHA, provided an update on the work of the HPC Steering Group. A learning exercise was carried out on the application of the HPC in L3s, while a fast track process to develop the necessary guidelines was also put in place. The HPC Steering Group agreed on the need to streamline timelines and deliverables. The guidance is being reduced to a minimum to allow HCTs to contextualize it. The timeline in protracted L3s is being modified to allow for more country level ownership and better linkages between the needs overview and the strategic plan. The guidance on Strategic Response Plans (SRP) and the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) will be shared with the WG on 5 July for electronic endorsement by 15 July. The Steering Group requested an extension of its mandate until the end of August to finalize the HPC Reference Module Version 2.0 and its associated guidance prior to submission to the WG. A note being prepared for the EDG will also be shared with the WG.

During the discussion, the necessity to change culture and the way we do business, particularly at the country level, was raised. The TA should be about the way we work and, therefore calls by some donors to end the TA must be carefully managed. The fact that the TA has not yet been rolled out is resulting in frustration among many, given that the guidelines are being reviewed. The reduction in the number of products required alongside the HPC was seen as positive, but caution was raised that some NGOs may not yet see the true value of engaging in the various processes associated with the HPC. The disconnect between the needs analysis and strategic plans was raised, highlighting the concern that if the strategic plan is not based on an objective needs analysis, then everything related to accountability to affected populations is much less effective. Currently, the TA protocols and related guidance do not refer adequately to technical standards, such as Sphere, which could lead to gaps. The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) currently being developed and out for consultation was referred to as a way to potentially reinsert the importance of technical and common standards; IASC organizations were encouraged to provide input on the current draft of the CHS.

On the request for an extension of the HPC Steering Group’s mandate and the timeline for the development of the HPC Reference Module Version 2.0 and its associated guidance, the WG agreed that the extra time should be granted until the end of August to ensure quality products.

***Action Points:***

1. Extended the HPC Steering Group’s mandate until the end of August to finalize the HPC Reference Module Version 2.0 and its associated guidance, with joint WG/EDG members to convey that decision to the EDG (Action by: *HPC Steering Group by 31 August 2014 and joint WG/EDG members by 4 July 2014*)
2. The HPC Steering Group to share: the paper being produced for the EDG with the WG and the learning gathered from the L3s with the WG and EDG to contribute to a) the upcoming EDG/donor discussion and b) the revision of the paper on L3s in slow-onset and protracted crises (Action by: *HPC Steering Group by 4 July 2014*)

Review of the Ad Hoc Meeting

WG members expressed general satisfaction with the meeting and were asked by the Chair for suggestions to improve future meetings. Scheduling a meeting with the Task Team Co-Chairs was suggested. WG members were encouraged to propose themes for future Ad Hoc WG meetings.